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ABSTRACT

This practicum attempted to increase parental understanding and acceptance of the process for referral, screening, testing, and selecting children for a gifted program in a northern Florida community; to improve the self-concept of children who were not found to be eligible; and to decrease the time spent by school personnel in resolving problems that occur when referred students are not placed. The project involved revising the screening criteria (giving less weight to teacher and parent rating scales) and developing a sequential plan for both verbal and written communication with parents from the time they expressed interest in having their child in the gifted program until after the selection had occurred. Evaluation indicated that a majority of the parents of students referred and evaluated during the implementation period participated in an evening meeting, a conference after the testing, and the selection process. As a result there were only two problem situations resulting from a group of 35 parents. In addition, the students related positively to the process and no evidence of damage to self concept from nonplacement in the gifted program was noted. (Author/DB)

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Improving Parent-School and Child-School Relationships When
Evaluation for a Gifted Program Does Not Result in Placement
by Increasing the Opportunities for Communication

by

Elizabeth F. Carter

Cluster 29

A Practicum I Proposal presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1989

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ABSTRACT

Improving Parent-School and Child-School Relationships When Evaluation for a Gifted Program Does Not Result in Placement by Increasing the Opportunities for Communication. Carter, Elizabeth F., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Gifted/Education/Identification/Psychology of/Parent Attitudes/ Toward Gifted/Parent-School Relationships/ Talent Identification/.

This practicum was designed to improve parent-school and child-school relationships when evaluation for a gifted program did not result in placement. The goals were to increase parental understanding and acceptance of the process for referral, screening, testing, and staffing of children for the gifted program, to improve the self-concept of children who were not found to be eligible, and to decrease the time spent by school personnel in resolving problems that occur when referred students were not placed.

Based on her review of the literature, the writer made recommendations to her district Exceptional Student Education personnel for revising some of the screening criteria for gifted programs. The writer then initiated a sequential plan for both verbal and written communication with parents from the time they expressed interest in having their child in the gifted program until after the staffing had occurred. She also arranged an opportunity to interact with the referred students before and after the testing.

The results of the practicum were positive. The majority of the parents of the students referred and evaluated during the implementation period participated in an evening meeting, a conference after the testing, and the staffing. As a result, there were only two problem situations resulting from a group of 35 parents. In addition, the students related positively to the process and no evidence of damage to self concept from nonplacement in a gifted program was noted.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

School district Z is located in North Florida in a community of 176,000 people. This section of the state is not tropical and enjoys a mild but distinct change of seasons. The city is situated some 35 miles from the Gulf of Mexico in an area of rolling hills canopied by a variety of trees. It is considered to be an unusually clean and attractive town and several nationally distributed magazines have included it in their choice of the "top twenty" most desirable cities in the nation.

The per capita income in Z is only \$13,388 annually, but unemployment is less than 3.4 percent and almost 95 percent of the residents work in non-agricultural jobs. The seemingly low per capita income is influenced by the almost 40,000 college students who live in the community. Many of them hold lower paying part-time and temporary jobs. A positive factor is the relatively inexpensive cost of living in community Z as compared with other larger Florida cities and with comparable towns in other parts of the country (Florida Trend Yearbook, 1988).

The primary employers in the community are state government, two state universities, a sizable community college, and a large regional medical center. There are also many professional persons working in the private

sector. The yellow pages of the local telephone directory lists over 800 attorneys, more than 400 medical doctors, and hundreds of accountants, architects and engineers. In addition, there are many college professors, public and private school teachers, and other professionals too numerous to mention. In short, Z is an affluent community with a well educated and upwardly mobile citizenry.

The school system in Z serves 27,000 students in grades Pre-K through 12 in 33 schools and programs. Elementary school A is one of those schools. It presently has over 900 students and is located in the most affluent section of the city. It serves a "country club" community where home values are in the \$200,000 to \$500,000 range as well as some more modest suburbs with homes beginning in the \$100,000 range. It also has a very small population of minority students from depressed SES areas. These students tend to live in somewhat isolated "pockets" that were very rural ten years ago but that are now being surrounded and overwhelmed by the affluent suburbs. The majority of the students who attend School A however, are the children of upwardly mobile professionals who have demonstrated high expectations from the school and its services.

The Writer's Role

The writer is employed in district Z as a school psychologist. She has been employed as a school psychologist or school psychology coordinator for the past nineteen years, fourteen of them in district Z,

and she has been the school psychologist at school A for six years. The job responsibilities of the school psychologist include administering psychological tests to students who are referred to her for a variety of reasons. Among those reasons is the need for intellectual evaluations to assist in determining eligibility for the gifted program. She is also responsible for informing parents about their child's test performance and interpreting test results to them. It is also incumbent upon her to ensure that children feel comfortable in the testing situation, that they have an opportunity to work up to their full potential, and that their testing experience is not harmful to their self concept.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

During the past two decades there has been an increasing concern in the American society that children who have intellectual potential not be overlooked and that their needs be met through special educational programming. The "sputnik scare" of the late 50's and early 60's resulted in special emphasis being placed upon efforts to be sure that gifted and talented students were identified and placed in learning situations that would encourage their intellectual development. Another landmark was the passage of PL-94-142 in 1975 by the federal government. This law was intended to assure that all "special" or "exceptional" children received educational opportunities that met their particular needs, and a great deal of money was made available to the states to assist them in funding these programs. In Florida, the goal of providing challenging and stimulating programs for the intellectually gifted joined hands with the mandates of PL-94-142, since Giftedness is, by statute, an exceptionality in this state.

Florida statute also defines the criteria under which a student can be deemed "gifted" but allows the school district to set up their own screening criteria and their own identification process. The criteria and the process may be more stringent than the Florida statute, but it cannot be less so. The statute requires that a gifted

student must have intellectual functioning at least two standard deviations above the mean on an individually administered intelligence test and the test must be administered by a licensed or certified psychologist. Statistically, only two percent of the population should score two standard deviations above the mean on an IQ test. This would limit "giftedness" to only two out of every 100 persons in a normal population sample. Of course, not every population is "normal" and the incidence of giftedness is much higher in some groups than in others.

From 1960 to 1970, efforts to identify gifted students was primarily a responsibility of teachers and group academic achievement tests were their main tool. In the late 1960's, more school districts began to employ or to contract with psychologists to assist them with this task. When the implementation of PL-94-142 required that special programming be based on psychological evaluations, most school districts employed their own school psychologists. During the late 1970's and early 1980's parents of school children became more aware of their rights and became increasingly involved in securing services for their children within the school setting. This is especially true of parents who feel that their child may be intellectually gifted and who wish to insure that their child's educational needs are being met. This awareness of the school services, their rights as parents, and interest in gifted programming, is especially evident in parents who are well educated themselves. Thus, in schools such as

School A, testing for the gifted accounts for a significant number of the referrals to the school psychologist.

During the 1987-88 school year, School A referred 11% of its population for psychological evaluation. Over half of those referrals, or 58% were students who were being considered for possible inclusion in the gifted program. Of the students who were evaluated, 40% met the district and state criterion and were placed in the program. This means that 60%, or more than half, did not. While program eligibility usually results in positive feedback from both parents and students, this is frequently not the case with those who are not found to meet criteria for placement. In many cases, these "non-gifted" referrals result in situations that are negative for the child, the parents, the school, the district, and the school psychologist. They tend to become very time consuming and frustrating for all of the participants and are seldom brought to a really satisfactory conclusion. Of particular concern is the "non-gifted" child who feels that he or she has "failed" to meet their own and/or their parents expectation and who suffers a loss of self esteem as a consequence. Also of concern are the parents who feel that the eligibility criterion are arbitrary and unfair and that their child's needs are not being met. In addition, the writer and the school and district personnel feel frustration at not being perceived as advocates for children.

Difficulties in dealing with the problems of the non-gifted usually surface when the parents are first informed

of their child's test results. In many cases, both the parents and the child had assumed that passing the screening criteria guaranteed entrance to the gifted program. They do not understand how the child could "pass" one and not the other. A second problem area is in explaining the difference between academic achievement and intellectual giftedness. Most parents and children equate high grades and academic test scores with high IQ and feel that students who are high achievers "deserve" to be in a gifted program. Many parents feel that the IQ score is an arbitrary criteria and that other factors such as artistic or musical talent, bi-linguism, or a high level of scientific interest, should be taken into consideration. Parents are often upset when a student was in a gifted program in another state and does not meet Florida criterion for continued participation. Finally, some parents feel that having siblings or other family members in the program should be considered as well. As a result of a child being found "non-gifted", teachers and parents often report depression, loss of self concept, and decreased academic motivation. Some children feel that they have failed in some way and are tearful and anxious. Many of them will ask the school counselor to help them handle these feelings and a few will seek out the School Psychologist to ask what they can do to improve their test performance.

The school referral coordinator and the writer feel that they are placed in an uncomfortable position with the

parents and the children. Neither of them are responsible for the screening or placement criteria but they are the individuals most closely associated with the identification procedure. As a result, they spend the greatest amount of time trying to help the parents and the students understand the criteria, interpret the test results, and sooth the angry and hostile repercussions. The School Principal and the District Staffing Specialist are also in untenable positions. They too must deal with the negative feedback from frustrated parents which in some cases might include a due process hearing or even legal action.

At the end of the 1987-88 school year, the writer and the school referral coordinator reviewed the instances of "non-gifted" problems that had occurred during the year. It appeared that lack of a structured plan for dealing with the problems as well as lack of time had contributed to their escalation. In most cases, a "shotgun" approach had been used rather than a systematic one.

Concisely stated, at School A, referrals for children who are referred and evaluated for the gifted program but who are not found to be eligible often result in negative and time consuming situations that are unsatisfactory to everyone involved. The children do not feel good about themselves, the parents are angry and the school personnel are frustrated.

Problem Documentation

During the 1986-87 and 87-88 school years, 114 students at School A were evaluated to determine eligibility for the

gifted program. Sixty-nine of those tested did not meet state and district criteria for placement. Of the 69 who were "non-gifted", 21 resulted in situations that could be described as "problematic". The case logs of the writer and the school referral coordinator reveal that more than 60 hours had been devoted to conferences and other interactions with the parents and/or the children in the 21 problem cases. These hours did not include the usual and expected time that is spent in evaluation, parent feedback conferences and in staffings. It also did not include time spent by the principal, assistant principal, teachers, and other district personnel in attempting to reach resolution.

Causative Analysis

There are at least four probable causes of this problem. They include; the state and district criteria for placement in the gifted program; the district screening criteria for evaluation for gifted programs; the referral-to-staffing process; and the attitudes toward giftedness and gifted programs that are held by parents, students, teachers and society.

The state criteria for inclusion in the gifted program indicates that a student must have an IQ score that is two standard deviations above the mean on an individually administered intelligence test. District Z's policies permit students over eight years of age to have a score that is two standard deviations above the mean on either the Verbal or the Performance areas of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, if they also have

group academic achievement scores above the 97th percentile and a strong teacher recommendation. In some cases, children whose IQ scores are within the standard error of measurement are also placed if they have the high academic achievement scores and a strong teacher recommendation. These fine distinctions in the criteria are difficult for parents to understand and impossible to explain to children. A further complication occurs when the parent is aware that in many other states IQ scores are not used for gifted placement and that much of the research recommends against the use of a single test score to determine eligibility.

In 1987-88, district Z introduced a new screening criteria for further evaluation for the gifted program. It was designed to be a matrix that would require the student to earn points from a number of areas. A total point value of 12 would qualify the student to be referred to the school psychologist for the IQ evaluation. The areas included a parent inventory, a lengthy teacher rating instrument (the Ranzulli-Hartman), a self assessment for the student to complete, a checklist of creative positives to be completed by a teacher other than the student's regular classroom teacher, a score from the Otis-Lennon Mental Abilities Test, and the total score from the student's most recent group academic achievement test. If a student did not receive a given number of points on the teacher rating scale, he or she, was automatically ineligible to continue through the screening process.

The philosophy behind this screening program was excellent and was a reflection of the district's desire to broaden the opportunities for children to be referred for gifted. At School A, it was not well received for the following reasons. The parent and student checklists tended to have spuriously high scores. The teachers objected to the lengthiness of the rating scale and to the responsibility that it put on them for assuring that a student continued through the screening process. As a result, many teacher admitted that they tended to rate much more positively than they would under ordinary circumstances. The teachers who were asked to rate the students for creative positives felt that they did not know them well enough to do so, and, like the classroom teachers, said that they preferred to rate high to avoid the responsibility for eliminating a student from the screening. Finally, the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test has been shown to have some predictive value in screening students for further evaluation as have the group academic achievement test scores. Under this system, the OLSAT score and academic achievement scores could be less than impressive and the student could still accumulate enough points to go on for further testing if he or she had high scores in the other areas. The overall result of this screening procedure at School A seemed to be an increase in referrals for further evaluation for students who were not strong candidates for the gifted program. This led to raising unrealistic expectations in students and parents.

Further difficulties were experienced with the referral-to-staffing process. In order to conform to legal requirements, the process followed this sequence. The parents were first informed by letter that their child had been referred for screening for the gifted program and they were asked to give written permission for their child to take the screening test (the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test). The parent inventory was also sent to them for completion. Upon completion of all of the steps of the screening, the parents were informed by letter that their child had "passed" and they were sent a permission form to sign for psychological evaluation. After completion of the psychological evaluation, they were informed by letter and asked to call for more information about the test results. After either a telephone or a personal conference with the school psychologist, they were again informed by letter of the time and place of the staffing. At the staffing they were informed of their child's eligibility or ineligibility and were asked to sign the appropriate forms.

For many parents and children at School A, this process also seemed to raise unrealistic expectations. They did not understand the steps in the process and were confused about outcomes. Both parents and students revealed that they thought the gifted placement was going to occur after they were informed that the child had "passed" the initial screening. Several parents were angry that the school psychologist was unable to tell them the status of their child's eligibility after the testing, and a number of

parents did not feel that an Exceptional Student Education staffing was an appropriate closure for the process.

Finally, another probable cause of this problem is not specific to District Z or to School A, but to societal attitudes toward giftedness and gifted programs and the attitudes of parents, students, and teachers toward giftedness and gifted programs. In recent years, gifted programs have come to be regarded as elitist and exclusive. In a materialistic society where young professionals seek to live in the right neighborhood, drive the right cars and belong to the right clubs and organizations, it is not surprising that they want their children to be in the "right" educational program. In a democratic public school system where discriminatory organizations and activities are not permitted, having a child in the gifted program has come to be a status symbol. Unfortunately this attitude is shared by many of the students at School A and by some of their teachers as well.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Despite the existence of abundant research that supports a multiple criteria approach (Dirks & Quarfoth, 1981), Florida is still one of the twenty-six states that defines intellectual giftedness by statute on the basis of an IQ score ((Ranzulli, 1978). Zettel (1979) reports that over 75 percent of the states have statutory definitions of gifted and that 38 states have regulations regarding identification and screening. Given the diminishing financial resources that are available to support

educational programs that are already in place, it is unlikely that Florida will change the statute to a multiple criteria approach that would probably result in the identification of even more students who would have to be served by the gifted program.

At the screening level however, Florida school districts may set their own criteria and there is a great deal of difference in the criteria used by school districts within the state. Again, the literature explores the different screening approaches in some depth. Dirks and Quarfoth (1981) compared and contrasted two types of multiple criteria models which they described as "depth and breadth" models as well as the traditional "IQ test" model (p 437). The breadth model recommended students for gifted classes if they scored moderately well on several tests at the same time. The depth model selected children who scored superlatively well on any one test. The IQ model used the single score criteria for placement. They found that students selected by a breadth model had very high classroom grades and were well liked by their teachers. Children chosen through the depth method tended to have unusually high IQ's but might not be high achievers academically, and those elected through the single criteria had high IQ's but may or may not have had good grades. While all three models were found to have some merit, the depth methods appeared to be best in selecting students for gifted programs.

Harrington (1982) also speaks against single criteria methods of screening, particularly when group administered tests are used to obtain an IQ. He notes that the higher the level of ability that a student possesses, the greater the discrepancy between that child's group IQ and their IQ obtained on an individually administered test. He also points out that teachers who are unfamiliar with this fact may give misinformation to parents. Wright (1983) used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised as a screening instrument and compared the results with later administration of the WISC-R. He found only a modest degree of predictability with the PPVT-R and reports that teacher referral and academic achievement were better predictors than this particular test. Rust and Lose (1980), investigated the Slosson Intelligence Test along with a Behavioral Rating scale in screening for the gifted. They report that the SIT was a better predictor of WISC-R scores than the rating scale with the best correlations occurring between the WISC-R Verbal scores and the SIT.

Some school districts use brief or short forms of the WISC-R as part of their screening process. Elman, Blixt, and Sawicki (1981), and Karnes & Brown (1981) all analyzed WISC-R subtests to determine which were the best predictors of a full scale IQ in the gifted range. Both studies recommended the Vocabulary - Block Design dyad as being most useful for this purpose. Ashman and Vukelich (1983) report that the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test, a group administered IQ test, is also frequently used as a

screening device but did not comment on its efficacy. Schmidt and Perino (1985) used the OLSAT as part of their battery to predict school success in kindergarten children and found it to be a good predictor at the high end, i.e. those children who had achieved high scores on the OLSAT also tended to receive high scores academically.

After evaluating an identification process for gifted programming Buchanan (1987), reports that multiple assessment techniques provide the most useful information. She recommends IQ testing along with parent and teacher rating scales. For most researchers, teacher rating scales are a crucial component of the multi criteria models. Ashman and Vukelich (1983) studied three different types of teacher nomination forms to determine their effectiveness in identifying gifted children. They were the Ranzulli-Hartman Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students, a checklist of behavioral characteristics of gifted children developed by the authors, and a list of potential gifted students generated by the teachers from classroom observation. While the Ranzulli-Hartman was found to be the most useful teacher rating device, the teachers described it as too time consuming to be valuable for wide spread usage. The checklist developed by the authors was found to be almost as effective and consumed less of the teachers time resulting in a better level of acceptance from them. Dirks and Quarfoth (1981) also describe the Ranzulli-Hartman scale as being too time consuming and they too developed a

briefier questionnaire for use in their study of screening strategies.

Another component in the multi criteria screening method is the academic achievement test, although it has been known for many years that academic achievement has little relationship to superior intelligence (Terman & Oden, 1947). Ranzulli (1978) also points out that academic skills assessments have little validity as predictors of how a student will achieve on other measures. In most districts, the academic test of choice is the one used in system-wide assessment. Dirks and Quarfoth (1981) report that many of the students selected for gifted testing in a "breadth model" were those who scored in the top decile of their class on these types of tests but were the least likely to be chosen by a "depth model" or by the IQ model. Ashman and Vukelich (1983) note that predictability of IQ scores by scores on the California Achievement Test were the lowest of all the variables that they considered in predicting giftedness.

In Who Gets Ahead: The Determinants of Economic Success in America (Jencks, et al, 1979), high academic test scores appeared to have a positive correlation with economic success in adulthood, but the authors caution that poor academic test scores often result from poor schooling which is, in turn, affected by socioeconomic status. This same variable is present in the school situation. Children from a higher socioeconomic level may have higher academic achievement not because they are intellectually brighter,

but because they have a wider repertoire of experiences and more environmental advantages (McKenzie, 1986, Seginer, 1983). In fact, Ashman and Vukelich (1983), suggest that, "in schools where a large majority of the children score very high on a standardized achievement test, some other measure of academic success must be found" (p. 527). Finally, Jenkins-Friedman (1982) warns that while multiple selection criteria are desirable in screening for giftedness, it is essential that they not be allowed to obscure the fact that standardized test scores still control the outcomes.

The problem of the cumbersomeness of the referral to staffing process appears to be one that is unique to each school district and was not found to have been explored in the literature. The Staffing and Admissions unit of the Exceptional Student Education Division in District Z, developed a questionnaire for parents during the 1978-88 school year to obtain further information about this problem, but the results of that study have not yet been released.

Conversely, the fourth problem area, that of parent, student, teacher, and societal attitudes toward giftedness and gifted programs is beginning to receive a lot of attention. These attitudes may be positive, negative, or elitist. With the latter being perceived in a positive or a negative manner depending on orientation of the beholder.

Historically, society has been interested in individuals who demonstrate exceptional ability. Equally as

old as this interest are the widely disparate opinions about what constitutes giftedness and why it occurs. Ranzulli (1978) states that those attributes which are considered to contribute to giftedness are determined by the needs and values of the prevailing culture at a given time. In The Gifted Child In The American Culture of Today, Margaret Mead (1954), in writing about giftedness, states that, "the American culture combines a Puritan attitude towards success - making good, the reward of hard work, postponement of pleasure and exercise of virtue - with a belief that if success is excessive and conspicuous, it is the result of luck" (p.211). She further notes that success that is the result of hard work is approved relatively ungrudgingly. But when success occurs without visible effort, it is regarded as being without merit, as being only "luck". Robinson (1986) points out that modern society is ambivalent about giftedness. While gifted people may be admired, they are also envied and mistrusted.

Perhaps to make the not gifted feel better, a once popular stereotype pictured the intellectually gifted as being physically frail and socially inept. The "inferiority of superiority", as posed by Sumption and Luecking (1960), pictured the intellectual who was pale and wan and prone to fall over his own feet. The work of Terman and others revealed that not only were intellectually gifted children smarter, but they also tended to be more physically robust and to be more socially popular (Terman & Oden, 1947). The perception of giftedness, as evidence of biological

superiority was taken to its extreme, by Leta Hollingsworth, a follower of eugenics. In 1924, she wrote that giftedness is biologically determined and she saw social position as an important factor in exceptional intelligence. According to Hollingsworth, gifted children "originate in families where the father is a professional man, an owner or executive in business, or a clerical worker" (Seldon, 1983, p.187). Other authors criticized the snobbery that was evident in these descriptions of gifted individuals and accused this type of characterization as being idealistic and elitist. Frierson (1965) felt that this type of view was the result of studies on gifted students from higher socioeconomic levels. He found that gifted children from lower socioeconomic homes had biological and social characteristics that were compatible with their SES peers.

Discussions regarding the what and how of giftedness were primarily academic until the late 1950's and early 1960's. At that time, the "Sputnick scare" made Americans aware of the possibility of losing the first place position in the space race and a sudden emphasis was placed on identifying potentially gifted students (Feldman, 1979). In 1975, the passage of Public Law 94-142 contributed to the need to identify those with special gifts and to provide appropriate educational programs for them. For the past twenty-five years the literature has had many articles about how to screen, identify, and teach the intellectually gifted. There has also been an abundance of opinions about

what giftedness is and the extent of the responsibility of educational institutions to provide special programming for those identified. In a zealous effort to not overlook the identification of any student who might be intellectually exceptional, hundreds of thousands of youngsters have been dubbed with the gifted label. The assumption is that being labeled gifted and being provided with a different educational program is a positive experience for the student and a resource for the nation.

Now, in the late 1980's, educators and psychologists are asking if they might not have created a monster. Does being labeled gifted really have a positive affect on the student? Is it possible that it might have negative ramifications for him and his family? What about the questions asked by those who feel that special education for the gifted is contrary to the democratic principles upon which public education has been founded? Could they have a valid point after all?

Is the gifted label a positive one, and what are the components of a positive experience? Olstad (1978) views improved self-concept, academic success and adult achievement as measures of the success of gifted labeling and gifted education. She describes being happy, loving, kind, and "growing into a reasonably well-adjusted, happy, productive and empathetic adult" as a result of gifted placement (p.188). She further states that gifted education provides opportunities that are commensurate with a gifted students abilities that would not be available in a regular

school program. Finally, she quotes from a 1972 report to Congress that refers to the Terman longitudinal study. The study revealed that among the mid-life accomplishments of the group were five novels, five volumes of poetry, 32 scholarly books, four plays, over 200 scientific papers and at least five patents.

In a study published in 1980, Bracken explored the attitudes of 78 intellectually gifted children. He found that gifted children do exhibit a more positive attitude toward learning than a nongifted sample, but that self-concept is affected by so many other variables that generalizations could not be made. He also noted that factors such as popularity with peers does seem to increase with moderately gifted children, but decreases with students who have IQ's in the extremely gifted range. Cornell (1983) refers to a 1970 study by Kirkendall and Ismail which reported that gifted children appear to be better adjusted on certain personality tests. Cornell notes however, that they failed to control for factors such as an intelligent child's ability to discern the most socially acceptable responses. Cornell also mentions studies by Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg that indicate that gifted children tend toward higher scholastic performance and that they are more inclined to please and conform to adult expectations. Cornell points out that these same characteristics are common to first-born children and that further study is needed on the predominance of first-borns among the gifted population.

In a 1978 study of children's attitudes toward gifted identification and placement, Ford found that 90% of the students polled were satisfied with their label and their educational program. Ninety-six percent of the children said that their parents had told them directly of their pride in their being in the program and that they felt that their parents showed more interest in them after they were identified as gifted than before.

The issue of parental pride and expectation appears to be a common effect of gifted identification. Feldhusen and Kroll (1985) note that, "Once a child is identified as gifted, parent expectations of the child and the school tended to increase dramatically" (p.250). Cornell (1983) also states that parents who see their child as gifted report being prouder of that child and as having a closer relationship with him than with nongifted siblings. Dirks, Bushkuhl and Marzona (1983) say that mothers exhibit more pride in gifted children and have high expectations for them. As a result, these children may begin to try harder in school and to make better grades. They feel that the major advantage of gifted identification is the subsequent boost in pride and self-esteem and the positive parental expectations that it created, leading to better school performance. Mathews (1981) also found that after parent's were informed of their child's giftedness, a significant rise in expectation was noted. Reschly and Lamprecht (1979) studied the expectancy effects of a number of different special education labels and found that teachers also tend

to perceive gifted students as "the top of the heap" and to have high expectations for them.

Not everyone sees increased expectation as being a positive aspect of gifted labeling however. For many, it is perceived as a major negative factor. In the second edition of Growing Up Gifted (1983), Clark states, "Labels create expectations If we label children gifted to improve their educational experience, then we have an obligation to keep the negative aspects of labeling from becoming the major effect" (p.317). Cornell (1983) feels that this higher level of expectation can be detrimental to the child if it leads to excessive performance pressure or if the expectations are unrealistic. Robinson (1986) is another who does not perceive parental pride in their gifted offspring as being particularly positive. She describes these parents as being "puffed up with pride "and feels that their child's IQ is used for status at cocktail parties and social events. Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) in reviewing the literature on parents of gifted children found that some parents may see their bright child as a way to step up in socioeconomic status. Fischman (1985), in describing the major problems encountered by gifted children notes that they must often cope with unrealistic demands. These demands include their parents boasting about the child's giftedness and relying on the child for emotional support or social judgement. In, The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon , Elkind (1981), also refers to children being pushed to be "miniachievers" to

justify their parents need to have status and to justify their own lifestyles. Ross and Parker (1980) studied a group of gifted boys and girls in grades five through eight to compare their academic and social self concepts. They found that gifted children are confident of their academic skills, but have significantly lower confidence in their ability to handle social situations. One of the causes of the lack of confidence appeared to be based on negative peer judgements.

Mead (1954) cautions that gifted students may be perceived negatively because they are seen as having unearned gifts and that this could lead to resentment and antipathy. Evidently that is sometimes true since in Ford's (1978) study, 69 percent of the gifted students polled felt that nongifted children exhibited envious attitudes toward them. Robinson (1986) also asserts that giftedness may make a child the target of jealousy and hostility. Further, she points out that many parents fear that labeling their child may cause loneliness, snobbishness, and retaliation from teachers who do not like gifted students. Colango and Kelly (1983) refer to several studies that indicate that attitudes toward giftedness are negative and that children so labeled might be rejected by nongifted peers although their own study does not show this to be the case. Chitwood (1986) asserts that most gifted children know from early on that they are different and that for some, this difference is construed to be negative rather than positive. Fischman (1985) notes that some gifted children who are also

socially immature are particularly susceptible to feelings of inferiority.

One of the most alarming negative factors in gifted labeling comes from a 1983 study by Cornell which indicates that nongifted siblings of gifted children are significantly less well-adjusted than other nongifted children. Cornell attributes this to the fact that labeling one child "gifted", implicitly labels the other siblings as "nongifted". As a result, other siblings may be less favored and may develop low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. Weiler (1978) expands the effects of implicit labeling to the gifted child's peer group in school. She states that if 2% of the school children are perceived as the gifted, then the other 98% must view themselves as the ungifted and that their self-esteem is endangered since no amount of effort will afford them the same privileges that their gifted cohorts get for free.

This concept of entitlement to unearned privileges is the basis of the arguments that identifying gifted students and placing them in special programs is an elitist practice and is inappropriate in a democratic society. Weiler (1978), in writing about the Mentally Gifted Minors or "Alpha children" in California's gifted programs, describes the program as a "caste system". She states that she believes, "that there is a terrible potential in the assumption that these MGMS will be our future leaders when, as children, they have been treated as privileged aristocrats" (p.185). Callahan (1986) also questions the

right of gifted children to attend exclusive programs which might also be of benefit to other children and McKenzie (1986) states that gifted programs are a reflection of the existing patterns of inequality that are found in society. He further states that they work to the advantage of those who are already advantaged, i.e., those who have socially and economically advantaged backgrounds. Feldman (1979) suggests that the ways in which giftedness is defined accounts for the elitism of gifted programs. He believes that the measurement devices used to identify giftedness are biased in favor of the socially advantaged and that hostility toward giftedness will not be avoided until better identification criteria are found and used.

One of the strongest advocates of gifted programs, Paul Plowman, argues that identifying gifted students and placing them in gifted programs is not elitist (1988). He feels that it is essential to do so for democracy's stake in developing leadership and an improved standard of living for everyone. He goes so far as to say that it is needed for the survival of society. Plowman further suggests that special treatment for gifted students is no different from the exclusiveness of other school programs such as debate teams, athletics, or the top reading group. This view is also expressed by Colangelo and Kelly (1983). They too argue that there are a number of school programs that are exclusive or selective in nature and cite athletic teams, choir, and cheerleading as examples. In their study of the attitudes of students, parents, and teachers toward gifted

programs and gifted students, they found that while gifted education was not seen as highly important in the high school that they studied, there was no evidence that it was perceived negatively either.

Olstad (1978) insists that the pursuit of excellence is not elitism and compares the rights of gifted children to those of other handicapped students. She quotes Sidney Hook as saying in the Christian Science Monitor that, "everyone has a right to try out for the team, but not everyone has a right to be on the team regardless of his capacities" (p.188). Finally, she states that equal education and equal opportunity are not the same thing. All children are entitled to an equal opportunity for an education that is commensurate with their abilities but the results will not be exactly the same educational activities for every child.

Howley (1986) presents a different and intriguing view of what she calls, "the spectre of elitism" as it relates to gifted education (p. 117). She proposes first, that gifted education is elitist in that it seeks to mimic the existing patterns of social stratification. She says that "gifted education legitimates the unequal distribution of wealth and power in the United States", and she criticizes the provision of more advantages for the already advantaged (p. 117). But Howley states, that in the final analysis, gifted programs do not produce an elite because they do not teach the skills that lead to elitism in a materialistic society. She states that by emphasizing education in such noncognitive areas as leadership training, career

exploration, and values clarification, those students who might, by virtue of their intellectual skills, be capable of threatening the ruling elite are denigrated and made ineffective. She says, in effect, that gifted programs intend to be elite but, in actual fact, are not.

Since the implementation of PL 94-142 in 1975, a whole generation of children has entered kindergarten, matriculated through the progression of grades and received their high school diplomas. A large number of those students were identified somewhere along the way as being intellectually gifted and were served in special programs. Yet, 13 years later, the literature does not provide any longitudinal studies that would be of assistance in determining the positives and negatives of this type of labeling and programming. The scattered and rather limited studies that are available tell us that it is primarily parents who see giftedness as being positive and that this perception leads to an increase in interest in and pressure upon the gifted child. It also tells us that gifted students have a higher confidence in their academic skills than in their social skills and that a majority of them feel that nongifted peers are jealous of their advantaged position. The literature does not tell us much about how teachers view giftedness except that they also tend to expect more from students who have been so identified. There is almost no research on how nongifted peers perceive gifted student and special gifted programming, but there is some alarming evidence that the nongifted siblings of

gifted students may suffer a significant loss of self-esteem.

Possible elitism in gifted identification and programming is an old concern that has received renewed interest in the past few years. Some writers feel that identifying and serving giftedness is no different from selecting athletes for school teams, choosing cheerleaders, or assigning students to a top reading or math group. Others fear that tracing of this kind is a threat to our democratic way of life and perpetuates inequality by rewarding the privileged for unearned gifts.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of Goals

The general goals in examining this problem were to

1. Help parents to understand the referral and evaluation process.
2. Help referred students who were not eligible for gifted programs to feel comfortable with their test performance.
3. Create a more positive relationship between the school and these parents.
4. Decrease the time spent by school personnel in trying to resolve these problems with students and parents.

Statement of Objectives

The following specific objectives were projected for this practicum.

1. The percentage of referred students found to be eligible for placement in the gifted program would increase from 40% to 60%.
2. The number of hours spent by school personnel in attempting to resolve unsatisfactory outcomes would be decreased by one half.
3. The number of children who required further counseling as a direct result of the effect of the evaluation on their self concept would be reduced to zero.

Measurement of Objectives

Careful accounting of the incidence of students referred for gifted evaluation and the outcomes of their evaluations from February 22, through April 24, 1989 was kept by the writer on a referral log. This referral log was compared with the writer's referral log for the period from June 13, 1988 through August 3, 1988. This provided a baseline number of referrals and outcomes for a period of time before the implementation that could be easily compared with the number of referrals and outcomes obtained after the implementation. The period of time from June 13, 1988 through August 3, 1988 was chosen because it closely approximated the number and nature of the referrals that were included in the implementation sample. The first period was for seven weeks, the second for eight weeks. The first period included 36 referrals, the second included 35. Both groups included 14 referrals on first grade students. The writer's daily appointment book for those time periods were used to provide baseline and follow-up data to document the number of counseling sessions, parent conferences, and other contacts that occurred. The school referral coordinator provided her daily appointments also, and her contacts for these occurrences were noted on the writer's logs. In this manner, data was obtained for comparison purposes.

After the staffing occurred, the writer sent each parent a survey letter asking for their impressions of the referral-to-staffing process, their understanding of the

evaluation procedure, and their perceptions of their child's reaction to it. This data was used to address two of the writer's general goals, helping parents to understand the referral and evaluation process and creating a more positive relationship between the school and parents. No baseline data was available for comparison purposes with the 1988 group. A survey-type instrument was chosen because of its brevity and level of acceptability by the parents .

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Although there is a growing awareness of some of the negative aspects of referral to and evaluation for gifted programming, this is not a topic that has received much attention in recent literature. Allman (1987) describes the "hurt of the almost gifted child", and suggests meeting with parents to discuss the child's strengths and weaknesses, looking for new insights into the child's abilities, and meeting with the child to allow him an opportunity to discuss his concerns. Callahan (1986) understands the connotations of "winning" (being placed in the program) and "losing" (not being placed) and feels that the programs should be restructured to allow opportunities for more children to participate. In a study done by Dirks, Bushkuhl, and Marzano (1983) parent's reactions to finding out that their child had an "average" or "above average" IQ score was explored. They learned that negative parent conferences occurred much more frequently among the parents whose children were "average". These reactions included, parents minimizing their disappointment by casting aspersions on the testing process, and by "forgetting" the child's test scores. They recommended that special care and detailed parent informing should be a part of the process. They further suggested that information be given both

verbally and in written form and that emphasis should be placed upon the child's strengths. Mathews (1981) also states that parents who are involved and informed throughout the process have a more positive attitude whether or not their child turns out to be gifted. He recommends a one-night parent awareness meeting as well as more comprehensive interactions with them. Colangelo and Dettmann (1983) state that parents should be involved in the identification process and that emphasis should be placed upon the parent understanding that a gifted child is not necessarily gifted in all areas. This view is also presented by Chitwood (1986). She feels that most parents have fears and concerns about the evaluation process and lack information to help them make decisions. The theme that runs through this literature is the need for better communication with both the parents and the child but no objective data has been presented that would attest to the efficacy of these strategies.

Although this problem is not unique to School A or to School District Z, or to this particular point in time, the writer could not discern that any planned and systematic solution strategies have been implemented to resolve it. Her professional colleagues in district Z have had similar experiences in other schools, and colleagues from other parts of the state and the country also report an increase in this type of problem, especially in affluent areas. The consensus seems to be that more opportunity to debunk the mystique of IQ testing, more emphasis upon the diagnostic

aspects of evaluation, and a better relationship with parents would be helpful. In district Z's specific situation, some modification in the screening procedures was also suggested.

Description of Selected Solutions

In seeking to find strategies to help resolve these problems, the writer examined the causes and the solutions suggested by the literature and her colleagues. While she felt that attempting to change the state statute for identification of the gifted was too ambitious, she might be successful in bringing about some modification of the district screening procedures. If the screening could be changed so that it was a better predictor, it would help to avoid raising the expectations of students and parents unrealistically which results in negative feelings.

Since improving communication and developing a more positive relationship with the parents of children referred for evaluation for gifted placement was another solution strongly advocated by the literature and by school personnel, the writer designed a structured plan to enhance open and ongoing communication with parents throughout the referral process. She felt that several opportunities for communication were necessary, beginning before a referral was made if possible and continuing until the staffing.

The most crucial aspect of the resolution of the problem was improving student self concept. While the literature is only just beginning to explore this problem, the writer and her colleagues agreed that it was

potentially harmful to a large number of children and deserved attention. The writer initiated a program to reduce test anxiety and to help children become more comfortable with test results regardless of their outcome.

Report of Action Taken

The solution strategies began with a meeting between the writer and the district ESE staff regarding some suggested modifications to the screening criteria. Recommendations from the writer included using a shorter, simpler teacher rating scale as recommended by Ashman and Vukelich (1983) and Dirks and Quarfoth (1981). She also proposed using a higher cut-off score on the OLSAT, since it has been shown that high scores are usually needed on this instrument to obtain high scores on an individually administered test (Harrington, 1982). Finally, she asked that less emphasis be placed upon the scores from group administered achievement tests since School A is a situation where a high percentage of students score well on these types of instruments (Ashman and Vukelich, 1981).

One of her recommendations, to develop a shorter teacher rating scale was implemented. (See Appendix A.) She did not convince the district ESE staff to use a higher cut-off score on the OLSAT, or to place less emphasis on the academic test, but the point system was revised, giving less weight to teacher and parent rating scales and more weight to the OLSAT score. (See Appendix B.) The score on the teacher rating scale was no longer used as a single criterion for continuing the process. Some changes were

also made in the placement criteria such as the consideration of a split score or the standard error of measurement for children under 8 years of age when other data supported it. It was felt that these changes in the screening and placement criteria would lead to better identification of gifted students from the referred population thus decreasing the number of ineligible outcomes.

The goal of developing better communication and a more positive relationship with parents was addressed by having an evening meeting at School A that all parents who were interested in testing for the gifted were invited to attend. The writer, the school referral coordinator, and the school principal were present to explain the various criteria and procedures, and the time frame in which they could be expected to occur. The writer discussed with them the nature of the tests and their results and encouraged the parents to ask questions and make suggestions. The parents were given a written handout that described the referral process, gave information about the tests, and answered some frequently asked questions. (See Appendix C.)

From the date of the parent meeting forward, each referral for evaluation for the gifted in School A resulted in the parents being sent a letter (see Appendix D.) and a copy of the written handout given at the meeting explaining what would occur and giving them an idea of the time involved as well as information about individual psychological testing and the meaning of the scores. They

were invited to contact the writer if they have further questions or concerns. After the testing was completed, the parents received a second letter informing them of this event and asking them to call for an appointment to discuss the test results. (See Appendix E.) After the staffing had occurred, the parents were sent a short questionnaire asking for input regarding their perceptions of the helpfulness of the information provided to them and of their child's reaction to the process as well as the explanation of the test results and their overall reaction to the process. (See Appendix F.)

In order to improve the self concept of the students, the writer became involved with them earlier in the process than the day of the testing. When she was informed that a group of students had passed the screening, she met with them either individually or in grade level groups to discuss the testing, to give them some examples of the types of items that would be presented, and to encourage them to ask questions. After the staffing, she offered to meet individually with each child who was not found to be eligible.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The writer had three general goals for this practicum. The first was to help parents to understand the referral and evaluation process. This goal was met. Fifty eight parents attended the evening meeting at school A and their reactions were very favorable. Of the 35 students tested during the implementation period, 29 of their parents responded to the letter offering them a conference before the staffing and 34 parents attended the staffing. Out of 35 sets of parents, only two parents expressed negative feelings about the outcome. In comparison, when 36 students were evaluated in the summer of 1988, there were seven parents who had serious reservations about the process. Further, in the follow-up survey, 62% of the respondents saw the information provided as being very helpful, and 38% described it as being somewhat helpful.

A second goal was to create a more positive relationship between the school and these parents. This goal was also met. The follow-up survey revealed that 100% of the respondents felt that the test results were clearly explained and that their perceptions of the process were positive. More important, "problem situations" occurred in only two cases or .05% of the 35 in the implementation group. During the summer of 1988, there were seven problem situations from a similar group of 36 students.

The third goal was to decrease the time spent by school personnel in trying to resolve these problems with students and parents. This goal was met as well. There were only two problem situations from the implementation group and both were resolved by one additional conference of one hour each. During the summer of 1988, the seven problem situations absorbed more than 30 hours of staff time.

There were three specific objectives that the writer hoped to meet. The first was to increase the percentage of the referred students who were placed in the gifted program to 60%. This objective was not met but the rate of placement was improved. In the 1988 group 42% were eligible while in the 1989 group 58% were placed. This is an increase of 15%. Considering that not all of the writer's recommendations for more stringent screening criteria were put in effect, this is seen as being a satisfactory amount of improvement.

A second objective was to decrease the number of hours spent by school personnel in attempting to resolve unsatisfactory outcomes by one half. This objective was exceeded. The 1988 group had seven problem situations or 19% of the entire group and 33% of the ineligible group. The implementation group had only two problems or .05% of the entire group and 13% of the ineligibles. Staff devoted over 30 hours attempting to resolve the 1988 problems while one additional meeting, an investment of 2 hours, was all that was necessary to bring closure to the problem situations that surfaced in the 1989 group.

Finally, the writer wished to decrease the number of children who required further counseling as a direct result of the effect of the evaluation to zero. This objective was met. No student asked either the school counselor or the school psychologist for further assistance in dealing with ineligibility for the gifted program. The parents reported that as a result of the information that they were given, they had been careful to let their child know in advance of the testing that they might not be placed and that they deemphasized the importance of the testing. Further, the writer's meeting with the children before the testing appeared to have diffused their anxiety and helped them to be more accepting of the outcome.

This increased rapport with the students was an unexpected benefit from the implementation. The students had met and talked with the writer, knew why they were being tested, and knew what to expect. As a result, the actual testing sessions seemed to move more easily and the writer had more confidence in the scores. Another positive outcome was the wide dissemination of the written handout prepared for the parents. A number of parents and teachers from other schools asked for the material to use in their programs. The writer was also asked to provide a similar implementation at School A next year as well as in another school that she serves.

A negative factor in the practicum was the poor return rate of the parent survey. Of the 35 that were mailed, only 16 or 45% were returned. Parents at School A were so very

interested and involved up until the staffing that the writer had anticipated a better response. Unfortunately, it was an anonymous survey. The writer did not know which parents had not responded so that they could be contacted by telephone. Another negative was the lack of understanding that some teachers demonstrated when their referred students were found to be ineligible. While the implementation seemed to be very helpful in dealing with negative perceptions from parents and students, it did nothing to address the same concerns from teachers.

Conclusions

The implications for this practicum seem to be a confirmation of the views presented by Mathews (1981) and Colangelo and Dettmann (1983), that parental involvement throughout the entire referral to staffing process is crucial to establishing a positive relationship with them. The implementation demonstrated how a few hours of staff time spent in helping parents to understand giftedness, the evaluation process, and the eligibility criteria, can save many hours later. It also indicated that developing a relationship with students prior to the testing can lead to more satisfactory evaluations and can improve the students self-concept.

Recommendations

In addressing the need for parents and students to have a better understanding of giftedness, testing, and testing outcomes, the writer overlooked the teachers need for this same information. A short in-service for teachers

using the same materials and information that was presented to the parents would be very helpful. Better documentation of the efficacy of the implementation could have been obtained if the surveys had been coded in some manner so that the writer could have followed up on nonresponders by telephone. It would have been especially helpful to know if parents of noneligible children viewed the process as positively as the parents of eligible children.

Dissemination

Copies of this practicum report will be provided to the principal and referral coordinator at School A and to the writer's supervisor. Copies of the abstract will be disseminated to all of the writer's cluster members and to District Z's professional library. The writer plans to present this practicum experience with appropriate supporting materials at the annual conference of the Florida Association of School Psychologists in November of 1989.

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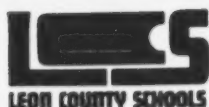
APPENDIX A
BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

Student Name _____	Grade _____
School _____	Date _____
Teacher or person completing this form _____	

	SELDOM OR NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	CONSIDERABLY	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. Has unusually advanced vocabulary for age or grade level; uses terms in a meaningful way; has verbal behavior characterized by "richness" of expression, elaboration, and fluency.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Possesses a large storehouse of information about a variety of topics beyond the usual interests of others of the same age.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Has rapid insight into cause-effect relationships; tries to discover the how and why of things; asks many provocative questions (as distinct from informational or factual questions); wants to know what makes things (or people) "tick".	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Reads a great deal independently; prefers subjects beyond the interests of others the same age; does not avoid difficult material; may show a preference for biography, autobiography, encyclopedias, and atlases.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Becomes absorbed and truly involved in certain topics or problems; is sometimes difficult to encourage to move on to another topic.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Is easily bored with routine tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Is quite concerned with right and wrong, good and bad; often evaluates and passes judgment on events, people, and things.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Displays a great deal of curiosity about many things; is constantly asking questions about anything and everything.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Generates a large number of ideas or solutions to problems and questions; often offers unusual "way out", unique, clever responses.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Displays a keen sense of humor, and sees humor in situations that may not appear to be humorous to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Is sensitive to beauty; attends to aesthetic characteristics of things.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Is self-confident with others the same age as well as adults; seems comfortable when asked to show own work to the class.	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Can express him/herself well; has good verbal facility and is usually well understood.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Seems to enjoy being around other people; is sociable and prefers not to be alone.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Tends to dominate others when they are around; generally directs the activity when others are involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Add Column Total	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multiply by Weight	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
Add Weighted Column Totals	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOTAL				

APPENDIX B
SCREENING CRITERIA
PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED



SCREENING CRITERIA
PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED

LDS-ESE	318
Approved	8/1/88
Expiration	None

51

Student _____ Student Number _____

School _____ Grade _____ Date of Birth _____

The Student Support Team will consider potential candidates for the Gifted Program according to four (4) criteria. A total of seven (7) points, one (1) of which must come from Criterion #1, are needed for a student to be eligible for referral to Diagnostic Services. Completion of all items is required.

1. Behavioral Characteristics of Gifted Students

(Appendix A) At or Above the Group Means

1

Points-Criterion #1
(must be at least 1)

2. Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)--or some other group intelligence test

Score: _____	135 or greater	5
Instrument Used: _____	130-134	4
Date Administered: _____	125-129	3
	120-124	2

Points-Criterion #2

3. Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP)--or any other norm-referenced achievement test, e.g. TOBE, CAT, SRA, CTBS

National Percentiles on Total Battery:

Date: _____	97-99	5
Percentile: _____	94-96	4
Test Used: _____	90-93	3
	87-89	2
	85-86	1

Points-Criterion #3

4. Parent Inventory (Appendix B)

Raw Score of 11 or Greater 1

Points-Criterion #4

TOTAL POINTS

Why would this student benefit from participation in the Gifted Program?

Signature of person
completing this form

Title

Date

APPENDIX C
HANDOUT FOR PARENTS

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN REFERRED FOR EVALUATION FOR THE GIFTED PROGRAM

THE SCREENING TEST

Your child has already gone through a "screening" before being referred to the school psychologist. You were asked to give written permission for him/her to take a group administered mental abilities test. That test, most often the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test, is a "pencil and paper" test in that the examiner gives the children test booklets and a pencil and then asks them to respond to certain orally presented questions and problems by marking in their booklet. There is a different test for each age level. Good students who have well developed attention skills and who are accustomed to taking tests usually do well on this type of instrument. As a result, older students may achieve much higher scores on this type of test than do younger children. The correlation between group administered tests of this type and individually administered tests is fair, but not outstanding. Remember that group tests are much less comprehensive than individual tests and they do not measure the same range of skills. Group tests are generally easier and it is not at all unusual for students to score much higher on them than on an individually administered test.

REFERRAL TO THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

When the school psychologist receives your child's referral, you will be contacted by letter and informed of when you may expect the testing to occur. If you have any questions, information to share about your child, or special requests regarding the testing, you will be invited to call and share them with her.

Before your child is tested, the school psychologist will arrange to talk with him/her either individually or in a group with other referred children to discuss the testing. She will explain how long it takes, what the test items are like, and she will respond to questions that the children have about the test. The purpose of this meeting is to help to defuse anxiety about the test and to let the children become acquainted with the school psychologist.

After you are informed that your child's referral has been received you can also help to prevent anxiety by reacting to this testing just as you do to other school activities. It is simply another part of the school program similar to Key Skills testing and CAP testing. You should encourage your child to put forth their best effort but do not exhibit anxiety about it yourself and avoid showing too much interest in it. If your child feels that "passing" this test is of great importance to you, it may increase their anxiety and can affect their performance.

THE IQ TEST

In our district we usually use one of three individually administered intelligence tests; The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R), The Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale- Fourth Edition ("new" Binet), or the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC). All of these instruments are appropriate for use with elementary school students.

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised.

The WISC-R is a test of global intelligence and gives scores in two areas of functioning, Verbal and Performance. Each area has five subtests. The Verbal subtests are Information, Similarities, Arithmetic, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. All five are question and answer type activities where the examiner asked the child a question and the child gives an oral response. In some cases the child may be asked to elaborate or "tell me more about....", or "can you think of another reason why....". There is no penalty for guessing or for incorrect answers and only the Arithmetic subtest is timed.

The Performance subtests are Picture Completion, Picture Arrangement, Block Design, Object Assembly, and Coding. Although the examiner will give your child verbal instructions about how to do these tasks, it is possible to administer these subtests without using oral language at all. Picture Completion requires the child to look at a series of line drawings of common objects and to determine what is missing. Picture Arrangement gives the subject a set of picture cards that he /she must arrange sequentially so that they tell a story. Block Design gives the child blocks and requires him/her to arrange them so that they look like a pictured design using identical blocks. Object Assembly is a set of jigsaw type puzzles. Coding is the only pencil and paper activity on the WISC-R. Here, the child copies a series of symbols or "codes" as quickly and as accurately as possible. All of these performance subtests are timed with bonus points being awarded for very fast and accurate completion of the tasks.

The range of possible scaled scores on the WISC-R subtests is from 1 to 19, with a score of 10 being the mean or average score. Scores from 8 to 12 are considered within the average range. The average IQ score is 100. A score of 130 is considered within the Gifted range.

The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition

Often referred to as the "new Binet", this test was published in 1986 and is the most recently standardized intelligence test that is available at this time. It has a total of 15 subtests, but only seven to nine of them are

administered to one child. The test manual instructs the examiner in which subtests to administer based on the child's chronological age. This test divides the subtest into four areas. They are, Verbal Reasoning, Abstract/Visual Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Short-Term Memory. Subtest scores, called "standard age scores", range from 24 to 82 with 50 being the mean or average score. Standard age scores from 42 to 52 are considered within the average range. On this test, a score of 132 is within the gifted range.

The Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children

Called the "K-ABC", this test has sixteen subtests, but again, not all of the subtests are given to every child. Subtest selection is based on the child's age. The K-ABC uses the term "Mental Processing Composite" rather than IQ and the subtests are divided into two areas; Sequential Processing and Simultaneous Processing. This test is much less verbal than the WISC-R or the Binet-4th Edition. That means that it has more "performance-type" items that use blocks and pictures and manipulatives rather than asking children to respond verbally to questions. Scaled scores for the subtests range from 1 to 19 with 10 being the average or mean score. Like the WISC-R, scores from 8 to 12 are considered within the average range and the mean or average score for the Mental Processing Composite is 100. A score of 130 is within the gifted range.

On all of these tests all of the subtest scores compare your child to other children of the same chronological age, that is, children who were born the same year and month as your child. Your child's grade placement is not considered in the scoring and the test items have nothing to do with material that is learned in school. Your child will not have to read or write on an individually administered IQ test.

AFTER THE TESTING

After your child is tested the school psychologist will prepare a written report that will be sent to the school. You will receive a letter informing you that the testing has occurred and inviting you to call the school psychologist to discuss the results if you wish to do so. The school psychologist can tell you the results of your child's testing but cannot make a determination of whether or not he/she will be placed in the Creative Academics program. State and Federal law mandates that placement decisions can only be made by a multi-disciplinary team at a formal meeting. You will be invited to this meeting (called a "staffing") as will your child's teacher, a designated administrator from the school, the school psychologist, the district staffing specialist, and whomever else you wish to have in attendance. You will be provided with a written report of the results of your child's testing.

QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

"How can I prepare my child for the test?"

In most cases no preparation at all is the best preparation. We have found that advance notice of the testing date and time often results in increasing test anxiety rather than alleviating it. In most cases children respond better when the testing session is a part of the regular school day. The school psychologist is a familiar figure to most of the students at Gilchrist and they are accustomed to seeing other children leave the room to "work with her". The school psychologist will ask your child how he/she feels and if this is a good day for them "put on their thinking cap". Young children are usually tested in the morning and every effort is made to avoid having testing interfere with favored school activities such as art, physical education, assemblies, etc. They are encouraged to tell the examiner when they become tired, hungry, have to use the restroom, etc. The examiner will also be alert for signs of fatigue, restlessness, or inattention. Frequent breaks are allowed and testing can be terminated and resumed at another time if necessary.

"What if I feel that my child needs special consideration?"

Some children do have special situations that the examiner should know about. If your child is on medication, has any type of sensory difficulties (i.e. vision or hearing problems), has speech or language problems, is considered shy and/or fearful of strangers, or has had emotionally traumatic events occurring in their lives, please let the school psychologist know before the testing. If you feel very strongly that you should be informed immediately before the test is administered, let us know.

"How do I deal with my child's questions after the testing?"

It is not unusual for young children to not mention to their parents that they have taken the test. This usually indicates that they considered the testing session a routine part of their school day and not of any particular importance. Most children enjoy the test and may tell their parents about the types of games that they played. Older children are usually aware that they have been tested and are anxious to know the results. Sometimes children will prepare themselves and their parents for the possibility that they did not "pass" by saying that they did not do well and recounting some of the items that they missed.

No matter how your child reacted to the testing, the parents should give a calm and nonjudgmental response. Comments such as "I'm sure you did just fine" are helpful. It is not productive to query the child about the specific questions or activities and their responses to them. You should explain

that the test results will be made available to you during a meeting at the school and that when you are informed, you will share the information with them.

"Should I tell my child his/her IQ score?"

Specific numerical IQ scores will vary from test to test and at different times in a child's life, but the range of intellectual functioning usually remains the same. For this reason, descriptions such as "average range", "superior range", etc. are more valid and useful than scores such as "105" or "126". Most children do not understand the meaning of IQ scores and have no standard to compare them to. They more readily understand being told that they are just as smart as other boys and girls of their age, or that they have some special areas where they are very smart while in others they are average. A child should never be told that they have a low IQ.

"Can my child be re-tested?"

Yes. If your child meets all of the other screening criteria, a retest can be administered after one year. Sometimes the school psychologist will suggest that you consider retesting and may give you a time when she feels it would be most appropriate. When your child is being tested for a second time it is especially important that he/she not feel pressured or anxious. Explaining the retesting to your child and being sure that your expectations are realistic are crucial.

"Can I have my child tested by a private psychologist?"

Yes. Be sure to use a psychologist who is Florida licensed or certified. You should also inform them before the testing that it will be necessary for them to submit not only a report of the evaluation results, but also copies of the test protocols to the school if the results are to be used for placement in a program. We are fortunate to have a number of highly competent psychologists in private practice in Tallahassee and most are very cooperative with school requirements.

"Where can I get more information?"

From your school referral coordinator, Dorothy Rumenik, from the school psychologist, Elizabeth Carter, or from the Coordinator of Diagnostic Services, Toni Mason. Call Mrs. Ruminek and Ms. Carter at 893-4310. Dr. Mason can be reached at 487-7328.

APPENDIX D
LETTER TO PARENTS PRIOR TO EVALUATION

Dear Parent.

Your child has completed the screening process and has been referred to the school psychologist for an individually administered test of intellectual functioning (or "IQ"). As a part of the screening, his/her teacher completed a checklist of characteristics of giftedness, he/she took a pencil and paper type mental abilities test that was probably given by the school referral coordinator, and his/her scores on a group administered academic achievement test were reviewed. When your child achieved a minimum number of 7 points in these three areas, he/she was referred to the school psychologist.

To give you an idea of the significance of this type of referral, during the 1987-88 school year 51 students were referred for individual testing for possible inclusion in the Creative Academics program. Of that number, 21 (or 41%) were found to be eligible for the program. This means that more than half of the students who were referred and evaluated were not eligible and may have been disappointed by the outcome of the referral. These numbers are characteristic of other schools in Leon County and in the state of Florida.

It should be noted that most of the students who passed the screening and received an individual evaluation did have IQ's that were in the Superior range (e.g. above 120). This is not surprising since students who demonstrate characteristics of giftedness in the classroom and whose academic skills are above the 90th percentile are usually very bright children who do well in school. In most cases, children whose IQ's are within the Superior range are indistinguishable from those who have IQ's within the Gifted range (e.g. 130 and above). They are all very bright and very capable.

Since we have seen that last year more than half of the students at your child's school who were referred were not eligible, we feel that it is important for you as a parent to understand the process in which your child will be involved. Whatever the outcome of the referral, we want you and your child to feel that participating in this process has been a positive experience and that you have been given information that will be helpful to you. We want to avoid any feelings of failure or loss of self-esteem as a result of this referral. IQ tests are fair predictors of academic ability but it has been shown that they have little value in predicting success in other areas of life.

We hope that the following information will be helpful to you helping us to work more effectively with you and your child.

Yours truly,

Elizabeth F. Carter
School Psychologist

APPENDIX E
LETTER TO PARENTS AFTER THE EVALUATION

May 12, 1989

Mr. & Mrs. John Smith
1200 Nature Trail
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

As you know, Johnny was referred for psychological evaluation by his teacher, Mrs. Brown. The evaluation was completed on May 8, 1989 and the report has been written. If you would like to talk with me about the results before the Staffing, please call me for an appointment. I am at School A on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the number is 422-1566.

Yours truly,

Elizabeth F. Carter M.S.
School Psychologist

APPENDIX F
QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS AFTER THE EVALUATION

Dear Parents,

Your child was recently involved in the process of being evaluated for possible participation in the Creative Academics (gifted) Program. It would be very helpful if you could complete the following questions and return this letter to me in the envelope provided. It is not necessary for you to sign your name.

	VERY <u>MUCH</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u>	NOT <u>AT ALL</u>
1. The information provided to me before the testing was helpful.	_____	_____	_____
2. My child seemed to perceive the testing in a positive way.	_____	_____	_____
3. The test results were clearly explained to me.	_____	_____	_____
4. Overall, my perceptions of this process are positive.	_____	_____	_____

Comments: _____

My child was _____, was not _____ placed in the program.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth F. Carter

Elizabeth F. Carter, M.S.
 School Psychologist

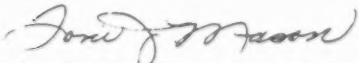
APPENDIX G

MEMORANDUM FROM SUPERVISOR
APPROVAL TO REPRODUCE DISTRICT MATERIALS

June 7, 1989

To Whom It May Concern

This letter will document that Elizabeth F. Carter, a School Psychologist in our District, has received permission to use and duplicate certain district forms to assist her in the completion of her Practicum for Nova University. Specifically those forms are LDS-ESE 318, Screening Criteria Programs For The Gifted and LDS-ESE 319, Behavioral Characteristics Of Gifted Students.



Toni J. Mason, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Diagnostic Services